



## Catholic **Faith, Life & Creed**

*A Complete Catechesis for Christian Living*

Doctrinal Catechesis Session  
Mary Birmingham

# SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM



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## Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### OPENING PRAYER

- ▶ Option 1: Use Opening Prayer from the Sunday Liturgy.
- ▶ Option 2: Use the prayer which is below.

#### Prayer of Pope Clement XI

Lord, I believe in you: increase my faith.  
I trust in you: strengthen my trust.  
I love you: let me love you more and more.  
I am sorry for my sins: deepen my sorrow.  
I worship you as my first beginning.  
I long for you as my last end.  
I praise you as my constant helper.  
And I call you as my loving protector.  
I want to do what you ask of me:  
In the way you ask, for as long as you ask, because you ask it.  
Let me love you Lord as my God.  
And see myself as I really am: a pilgrim in this world.  
A Christian called to respect and love all those lives I touch.



### Note to the Catechist

This session is longer than most other doctrinal sessions. If necessary it could be divided into

two sessions. Stop after you completed the Biblical Sign of Water. End with a Closing Prayer. Begin the second session at the following point: **LITURGICAL SIGN: BLESSING OF WATER AT THE EASTER VIGIL.** When you begin the second session pray an opening prayer, invite participants to summarize the first session and move directly to **LITURGICAL SIGN: BLESSING OF WATER AT THE EASTER VIGIL.**



### Read the connecting statement

to draw the line between this week's liturgy and this chosen doctrinal theme.

This connecting statement is found in the **Breaking Open the Word** worksheet for this week.

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NIHIL OBSTAT  
Rev. Steven Olds  
Censor Liborum

IMPRIMATUR  
† Most Rev. John Noonan  
Bishop of Orlando

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## Sharing Human Experience

Catechist leads participants in a brief small group sharing exercise. Break into small groups [three or four]. Remind participants to make time for all in the group to respond.

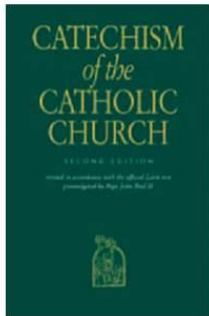
Those preparing for baptism:

- ▶ Why do you want to be baptized?
- ▶ What does it mean to you?
- ▶ What do you hope to gain from celebrating this sacrament?

Those already baptized:

- ▶ Those who are already baptized---what does your baptism mean to you?
- ▶ Can you think of any ways your baptism has given you the power to be a good disciple? In what way are you living and developing the grace and power of the baptism you have already received.

Catechist uses their responses to launch into a discussion about sacrament of baptism.



## Sharing Catholic Doctrine

Drawn from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Refer to articles 1214-1245.

### Introduction

- ▶ The word Baptism comes from the Greek *baptizein*—to plunge or immerse.
- ▶ The primary symbol associated with baptism is *water*.
- ▶ Our Church teaches that Jesus is present in our sacramental symbols. Thus, we encounter Jesus in the water of baptism. The sign itself conveys the reality of Jesus' presence.

### Rite of Sprinkling

- ▶ Sometimes a rite of sprinkling is celebrated in the introductory rites of Mass.
- ▶ Holy Water is sprinkled on the people as the priest moves through the assembly.



## Sharing Faith

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following question in the larger group.

- ▶ Why do we sometimes begin a liturgy by celebrating a rite of Sprinkling (especially during the Easter season)?

Catechist builds on responses such as, “The rite of sprinkling reminds us...

- ✓ of our baptism;
- ✓ that we are gathered together in Christ as a result of our baptism;
- ✓ to be faithful to our baptism;
- ✓ of our baptismal role as priest, prophet, king, etc.”

## Exploring the symbol of water

Let us delve more deeply and uncover the layers of meaning in the sign of water.



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### Natural sign of water

Catechist provides a glass bowl of water. Catechist moves to the water and places his or her hand in the water. Catechist invites others to come to the water just to experience it in its natural form. Catechist invites participants to close their eyes and feel the water on their skin, using these or similar words:

“Let us close our eyes and experience the feel of water on our skin. Let us ask God to be with us as we speak of and reflect upon the sacramental symbol of water. ”

After the experience with water, catechist continues the exercise:

- Divide easel paper into thirds.
- On the top third write: NATURAL PROPERTIES OF WATER.
- The middle third write: WATER AND BAPTISM
- On the bottom third write: HOW THE SIGN OF WATER REMINDS US OF GOD.
- Invite various participants to write the responses on the easel paper for the various exercises.





## Sharing Faith

- ▶ Think of the water you just encountered.
- ▶ What can you say about it?
- ▶ What are the natural properties of water?

Catechist invites participants to respond to the questions. Catechist adds to their responses with responses such as: water gives life, cannot live without it, it cleanses, water is death dealing; water gives life---watery womb, comforting, refreshing, and so forth.

Invite participant to write the responses on the third of the easel paper that says: **NATURAL PROPERTIES OF WATER.**

- ▶ Considering what you just said about water in everyday life, and your experience of touching the water, what might water teach us about baptism?
- ▶ Why do you think the ancient people used water as a ritual sign?
- ▶ Even the ancient Jewish people used water in their baptism rituals.
- ▶ What is it about water that speaks to us about baptism?

Help participants surface responses such as: water cleanses, thus baptism must cleanse us from sin; people are born from a watery womb, thus baptism must have something to do with being born again; water gives life; thus baptism is a life-giving sacrament. and so forth.

Write the responses on the middle third of the easel paper that says: **WATER AND BAPTISM**

- ▶ In what way does water remind us of or reveal God to us?

Help participants make connections about how water reminds them of the power of God and God's action in their lives. People cannot live without water just as they cannot live without God; water is life-giving, just as God is life-giving; water cleanses and refreshes, just as life in Christ is cleansing and refreshes our soul; just as a person can die in water; we die to sin in order to live with God.

## Biblical sign of water

Provide a second sheet of easel paper. Divide the sheet in thirds.

- On the top third write--WATER IN THE BIBLE;
- On the middle third write: WATER AND BAPTISM;
- On the lower third write: WHAT DOES THE SIGN OF WATER IN THE BIBLE REVEAL TO US ABOUT GOD?

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following question and writes their responses on the top third of the easel paper.

- ▶ What are some references to water in the Bible?

Elicit such responses as:

- ✓ Flood
- ✓ Red Sea
- ✓ Woman at the Well
- ✓ Ezekiel: I will sprinkle clean water on you...
- ✓ Psalm 23: Come to the Water...
- ✓ Isaiah: Come all who are hungry and thirsting...
- ✓ Woman who washed Jesus feet with water and her hair
- ✓ Jesus was baptized in water in the Jordan River

Write the responses on the top third of the paper marked: WATER IN THE BIBLE



Pharaoh's army engulfed by the Red Sea, oil on canvas, by Frederick Arthur Bridgman

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following question in the wider group.

► What do those Bible references teach us about baptism?

Write responses to the question on the middle third of the easel sheet marked: WATER AND BAPTISM.

Such responses should include:

- ✓ the flood reminds us that baptism completely cleanses us from the destruction of sin;
- ✓ the Red Sea reminds us that baptism liberates us- and makes us participants in the Promised Land-- the kingdom of God;
- ✓ baptism is cleansing and refreshing, just as the water of Ezekiel;
- ✓ baptism incorporates us into the life of Christ where our hungers are filled and our thirsts quenched;
- ✓ the woman at the well discovered the living water of Christ. Baptism gives us living water and opens us to eternal life.

Catechist invites an open discussion on the following question:

► What do those Bible stories and passages teach us about God and baptism?

Write responses to the question on the lower third of the easel sheet marked: WHAT DOES THE SIGN OF WATER IN THE BIBLE REVEAL TO US ABOUT GOD?

Such responses should include,

- ✓ the flood reminds us that God is the Giver of life;
- ✓ God leads us out of bondage into new life;
- ✓ God invites us to be refreshed and renewed in his love with the clean waters he sprinkles on us;
- ✓ God is the author of life.

What the last exercise teaches us is that our use of water in everyday life, in the Bible and the Church's tradition teaches us what we believe about baptism.



## Sharing Faith

### Exercise: Scriptural sign

Catechist divides the group into small groups. All the groups reflect and share about Romans 6.

A Reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans.

What then shall we say? Shall we persist in sin that grace may abound? Of course not! How can we who died to sin *[through baptism]* yet live in it? Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? (NAB Rom 6: 1-3)

- ▶ What is Paul saying to us in these verses? What do these verses mean?
- ▶ Water is the sacramental sign of burial into Christ's death.
- ▶ How are we/you baptized into Jesus' death?
- ▶ What does this passage teach us about baptism?
- ▶ What does it teach us about the Christian life?
- ▶ How are you baptized into Jesus' death—what are the implications?

The purpose of these questions is to get participants to come to the point of acknowledging that they join their suffering and joys (esp. suffering) to the suffering Christ and in so doing participate in the Paschal Mystery and the ongoing work of redemption in the world, thus giving us a place to bring our suffering and find meaning in the midst of it (that is, to the cross of Christ). Catechist then continues:

We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. (NAB Rom 6: 4-6)

- ▶ What are the implications of this sentence?
- ▶ What does it mean that we/you are united with him through the resurrection?



- ▶ What are the implications for your everyday life?
- ▶ What is going on in your everyday life right now that this would impact?

Catechist tells story from his or her life that would ignite conversation. See appendix #1. Catechist then continues:

St. Paul goes on to say:

We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin.

Catechist repeats the previous line and asks the wider group...

- ▶ What does this sentence tell us about baptism?

Catechist elicits their responses then summarizes with the following statements:

- ▶ Jesus saved us from sin on the cross and made it possible for us to be saved.
- ▶ Jesus made it possible to enjoy new life with him.
- ▶ Jesus' death made it possible for us to be freed from death's power.
- ▶ Before Christ's sacrifice on the cross death had the last word---no longer is this true.

For a dead person has been absolved from sin. If, then, we have died with Christ [in baptism], we believe that we shall also live with him. We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him. (NAB Rom 6:7-9)

Catechist then asks:

- ▶ If, like Paul insists, we die in Christ through baptism, what are the implications for us when he tells us that death has no more power over us?

Catechist continues:

Finally Paul tells the Romans:

As to his death, he died to sin once and for all; as to his life, he lives for God. Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as (being) dead to sin [through baptism] and living for God in Christ Jesus [through baptism]. (NAB Rom 6: 10-12)

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions.

- ▶ What is the challenge of this sentence?
- ▶ What does it mean to you that through baptism you are dead to sin and that you live for Christ?
- ▶ How should that impact the way you live your life?



## Community Connections

- ▶ What does the sacred Scripture teach us and does the Church want us to know about baptism?
- ▶ We die with Christ so we can be born again to new life.
- ▶ In baptism our old self dies with Christ so that new life [grace] might be born and remain in us.
- ▶ In baptism we join our lives to the Paschal Mystery of Christ, to his death and resurrection, and in so doing participate in the ongoing redemption of the world.
- ▶ Our suffering has redemptive value.

### An alternative option

Time permitting the catechist may provide texts that present a theology of baptism. These could be used as retreat material prior to baptism.

- ✓ Matthew 28:18-20; Apostles are sent to preach the gospel and to baptize.
- ✓ Mark 1:9-11. Baptism of Jesus.
- ✓ John 3:1-6: The meeting with Nicodemus.
- ✓ Any readings taken from the Lectionary for Mass: ritual Mass, “Christian Initiation apart from the Easter Vigil”, or another ritual Mass: “Christian Initiation: Baptism”.

Taken together they all express the theology of baptism. After each Scripture ask participants what each reading teaches us about baptism.



If dividing this session into two segments, stop here and pray a closing prayer.

**Part 2** If you divided the material in two parts, begin the second session at this point. Pray an opening prayer, summarize the first session and move to this point and continue to the end.

## Liturgical sign: blessing of water at the Easter Vigil

- ▶ We have looked at baptism from the perspective of the sign of water in everyday life.
- ▶ We have considered baptism from the perspective of Paul who understands baptism as a grave, a watery grave in which we die so we can be born to new life in Christ.
- ▶ Let us discover now what the Church teaches us about baptism through its use as a sacramental/liturgical sign.

Catechist invites participants to reflect on the theology inherent in the ritual blessing of water at the Easter Vigil. Begin by reading each part of the blessing of water from the Roman Missal, then inviting faith sharing among participants using these or similar questions.

O God, who by invisible power accomplish a wondrous effect through sacramental signs and who in many ways have prepared water, your creation, to show forth the grace of Baptism;

- ▶ What do you think *grace* is in the last statement?

Catechist elicits responses that will help participants name the reality that grace, according to Vatican II theology, is God's gift of himself. Catechist then goes on:

O God, whose Spirit in the first moments of the world's creation hovered over the waters, so that the very substance of water would even then take to itself the power to sanctify;

- ▶ What does this passage remind us about the origin of water and why it is used as a sacramental sign of baptism?

Catechist elicits responses such as:

- ✓ water is the source of life and fruitfulness;
- ✓ all creation is overshadowed by the Spirit of God, thus making water and all creation holy.

Catechist continues:

O God, who caused the children of Abraham to pass dry-shod through the Red Sea, so that the chosen people, set free from slavery to Pharaoh, would prefigure the people of the baptized;

- ▶ What do you think the story of the Red Sea has to do with baptism?
- ▶ What does it teach us about baptism?

Catechist elicits responses such as: Baptism

- ✓ is deliverance from bondage and slavery to sin.
- ✓ It is a journey to the PROMISED LAND/REIGN OF GOD/CHRISTIANITY.



Catechist continues:

O God, whose Son, baptized by John in the waters of the Jordan, was anointed with the Holy Spirit, and, as he hung upon the Cross, gave forth water from his side along with blood,

- ▶ What sacraments use the sign of water and blood? What then did Jesus gift us with as he hung on the cross?

Remind participants that while the Eucharist was instituted at the Last Supper it was given to us through his death and by the power of the Holy Spirit on Calvary---water of baptism flowed from the side of Christ out to the Church and the blood of the Eucharist flowed from the cross in order to continue the unbloody sacrifice. Jesus had to die in order to send the Holy Spirit and give us his presence in the midst of absence.

Catechist continues:

...and after his Resurrection, commanded his disciples: —Go forth, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

- ▶ What does this statement tell us about our baptismal responsibility?
- ▶ Why do you think we renew our baptism every year at Easter time?

Catechist continues:

...look now, we pray, upon the face of your Church and graciously unseal for her the fountain of Baptism.

May this water receive by the Holy Spirit the grace of your Only Begotten Son, so that human nature, created in your image and washed clean through the Sacrament of Baptism from all the squalor of the life of old, may be found worthy to rise to the life of newborn children through water and the Holy Spirit.

- ▶ What do these last statements tell us about the effects of baptism?
- ▶ What is the result of the grace of this sacrament?
- ▶ What happens to us in this sacrament?
- ▶ What touches you the most in this prayer?
- ▶ What speaks to your heart?
- ▶ How does this prayer speak to the journey you have been on over these past months?

## Rite of baptism used with infants

Another rite of the Church is the rite of baptism used with infants.

The following text is also a very important text for us to consider when it comes to naming what we believe about baptism.

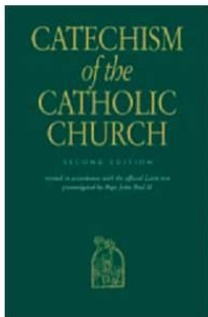
Catechist continues:

He now anoints you with the chrism of salvation, so that, united with his people, you may remain forever a member of Christ who is Priest, Prophet and King. [Rite of Baptism for Children, #62]

- What does it mean to you that baptism anoints a person priest, prophet and king?

Catechist elicits responses such as:

- ✓ we are anointed priest to serve and pray for/intercede and minister to God's people,
- ✓ we are anointed prophet to proclaim and live the Word of God through our words and our deeds
- ✓ we are anointed king in order to lead people to Christ. It is our baptismal mission.



## Sharing Catholic Doctrine

Drawn from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

From everything the liturgy teaches us about baptism, everything scripture teaches us and what we know about the sign of water from everyday life, let us now articulate what the Church teaches about this sacrament. Briefly recall what you learned about baptism today:

Baptism is:

- freedom from sin;
- participation in Jesus death and resurrection;
- being born again into Jesus' life;
- membership in the Body of Christ.

Catechist ties everything together by expressing the Church's theology of baptism,

## Theology of Baptism:

The cleansing with water by the power of the living *word* washes away every stain of sin, original and personal, makes us sharers in God's own life as his adopted children (RCIA #5). Here are the main points in our theology:

- ▶ The Church calls the sacrament baptism. Why baptism? Sin is buried in water.
- ▶ Grace is the gift of God's self.
- ▶ Anointing. Through baptism we are anointed priest [to serve God's people], prophet [to proclaim God's word through deeds and proclamation], and king [to lead people to Christ].
- ▶ Baptism is called Enlightenment—because baptism radiates the light of Christ in us.
- ▶ Baptism is called the garment of immortality as it veils or hides our shame/sin.
- ▶ Baptism is called the bath of rebirth as it washes and recreates us. The old self dies and the new self is born.
- ▶ Baptism is called a seal. It is our guard and the sign of God's Lordship over our lives. It seals us into Christ's life and mission—into the Paschal Mystery.
- ▶ Important: baptism seals a person with an indelible mark, forever baptized into Christ. Thus it cannot be repeated. That is why persons with a valid baptism in another Church tradition are not re-baptized.
- ▶ Water from the earth symbolizes life; water from the sea symbolizes death, thus representing the mystery of Jesus' death. Those who are baptized are one with Christ who died on the cross—we too die with him in order to be resurrected and share new life.
- ▶ Jesus spoke of his death as a baptism.
- ▶ Blood and water that flowed from Jesus' side is a prefiguring of Eucharist and baptism.
- ▶ Symbols associated with baptism: Water [water is both tomb and womb—we die to be reborn in Christ]; Garment [through Baptism we put on Christ]; Light [through baptism we are enlightened by Christ—we are to let our light shine for all to see].
- ▶ Baptism is referred to also as a washing of regeneration of the Holy Spirit; born of water and the Holy Spirit (CCC: 1215).
- ▶ We are washed clean and born again in the Holy Spirit as a new creation in Christ.
- ▶ Necessity of Baptism: Jesus himself said that baptism is necessary for salvation.  
John 3: 5
  - Those who suffer death for the sake of faith but are not baptized are saved and considered baptized by blood.
  - Those who desire baptism and die unbaptized are baptized by desire.
- ▶ Baptism forgives sins.
- ▶ Through baptism we are incorporated into the Church—the family of God.
- ▶ We become adopted children of God.
- ▶ There are three sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist.
- ▶ Valid baptism: What makes a valid baptism? The baptismal rite itself includes immersion or pouring water on the head while invoking the Father, Son and Holy Spirit: the Trinity.



- ▶ Every time we make the sign of the cross we remember our baptism into his death.
- ▶ Baptism challenges us to go out and baptize all nations---in other words, to bring people to Christ, to serve those people and to teach them about Jesus.
- ▶ Every Lent we prepare to renew our baptismal promises at Easter.
  - Catholics renew their baptismal promises and commitment once a year at Easter time.



## Mystagogy & your decision for change

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions first in dyads and then surface insights in the wider group.

- ▶ Every year we recommit to our baptism—to live as priest [to serve God’s people], prophet [to proclaim and live the word of God so others will come and see by the power of our example] and king [to lead people to Christ].
- ▶ How are you now living according to the call of baptism, either the baptism you already have or the one for which you are preparing?
- ▶ In what way are you presently dying with Christ so you can live again?
- ▶ In what way are you suffering with Christ so you can rise again?
- ▶ In what way are you offering the joys and sorrows of your lives for others and thus participating in Christ’s ongoing work of redemption?



## Community Connections

Liturgy, Scripture, and doctrine challenge us to transform our lives so that we can go out and help transform the world.

Catechist informs the group of any parish activity taking place and makes arrangements for group participation. For example:

- ▶ In light of all that was shared about the call of our baptism, what is taking place in the parish this week that invites participation of the participants?
- ▶ For example, “This week our parish is responsible for cooking the meal on Wednesday night for our city’s homeless shelter. We are going to meet at daily bread to serve the meal and then we will reflect on our experience after we have cleaned up.”

Catechist invites participants to respond in faith to the following challenge by writing their response in their journal or sharing with one other person.

- ▶ In what way has this session on baptism challenged you to be a better disciple?
- ▶ What needs to change in you to more fully join your life to the death and resurrection of Christ?
- ▶ Are there any behaviors or attitudes in need of transformation?
- ▶ What are you willing to do this week as a response to what we have shared today?

## Journal

What does it mean to you that baptism empowers you and calls you to be a priest, prophet and king? Who in your life right now would benefit from your baptismal calling as priest, prophet or king?



## Closing Prayer

Option 1: If this is a catechumenal session, end the session with Intercessions, Doxology ["Glory be to the Father..."], a minor rite—a blessing or minor exorcism, RCIA # 90-97.

Option 2: Use the prayer and ritual which is below.

### CONCLUDING RITUAL WITH THE SIGN OF WATER:

**Leader:** Let us ask God to bless this water...

*Everyone extend their hands in prayer.*

Leader reads **Option A: Blessing of Water, RCIA #311**

### Procession to the water:

**Leader:** Once you are baptized and if you are already baptized, you are invited to place your hand in the holy water fonts at the front of the Church and make the sign of the cross. Every time you make a sign of the cross you acknowledge that you are baptized into Christ's death and you recommit to carrying your cross for the sake of the world.

As our final prayer I invite you to come up two at a time and bless one another with a sign of the cross on the forehead. We are going to evoke memories of the rite of acceptance and rite of welcome, when some people preparing for entrance into the Church were signed with the cross. When you come forward, bless each other with water and say to one another;

"I sign you with the sign of the cross, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Play or sing an appropriate hymn, such as *Come to the Water*.

**Leader:** Lord God, strengthen all who are on a journey toward baptism.  
May the prayers of our community strengthen them on their way.

Give us the strength to live our baptismal call as priest to serve God's people, prophet to proclaim and live the Word of God and king to lead people to Christ.

Give us the strength to go out and baptize all nations through the example of our lives.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord Amen.

Let us go from this place by making a sign of God's peace.



## Appendix

#1.

No matter what happens in my life I have the hope of the resurrection to sustain me. I am invited to participate in Christ's death, and thus share in his ongoing work of redemption. Right now my family is experiencing a resurrection. For eleven years our son has been seriously mentally ill. His illness has consumed our lives. So many times it reflected nothing but hopelessness, death and destruction. We enlisted the aid of Christians all over the United States to pray for him. In spite of my faith in God I never really believed that much would happen when it came to my son's illness.

Schizophrenia is so debilitating we felt it would take a miracle of exodus proportions for any change to take place in my son's condition. Yet, the past year has proven us wrong. Yes, we have died with Christ. We have suffered with him. We offered the suffering of our lives for others who similarly suffer. But from that suffering has come a miraculous change. My son is now medicine compliant for over a year. He just landed an amazing new job and is cooperating with those who are trying to help him with his mental illness.

Only 35% of schizophrenics ever make it back to the work force and to a purpose-filled and meaningful life in society. We held out little hope. Yet today, the resurrection is ever before us. The son we knew before his illness has returned to us. We witness to the power of God and to a faith (as little as ours was!) that can move mountains.

Now I believe in such faith. The power of the resurrection propels me to be a voice for the hopeless and the powerless. I have been to the brink of hell and now I know what heaven is--basking in the awe of an amazing God. Trusting in the Lord and the willingness to journey into the abyss with him, to die with Christ so we can rise to new life, has given my life new meaning. Living out of the grace of my baptism gives me the strength to willingly embrace the cycle of death and resurrection and join my life to the Paschal Mystery of Christ.

## Handout on Baptism

A Reading from the Letter of Paul to the Romans.

What then shall we say? Shall we persist in sin that grace may abound? Of course not! How can we who died to sin *[through baptism]* yet live in it? Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? (NAB Rom 6: 1-3)

- ▶ What is Paul saying to us in these verses? What do these verses mean?
- ▶ Water is the sacramental sign of burial into Christ's death.
- ▶ How are we/you baptized into Jesus' death?
- ▶ What does this passage teach us about baptism?
- ▶ What does it teach us about the Christian life?
- ▶ How are you baptized into Jesus' death—what are the implications?

We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. (NAB Rom 6: 4-6)

- ▶ What are the implications of this sentence?
- ▶ What does it mean that we/you are united with him through the resurrection?
- ▶ What are the implications for your everyday life?
- ▶ What is going on in your everyday life right now that this would impact?

St. Paul goes on to say:

We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin.

- ▶ What does this sentence tell us about baptism?
- ▶ Jesus saved us from sin on the cross and made it possible for us to be saved.
- ▶ Jesus made it possible to enjoy new life with him.
- ▶ Jesus' death made it possible for us to be freed from death's power.
- ▶ Before Christ's sacrifice on the cross death had the last word---no longer is this true.

For a dead person has been absolved from sin. If, then, we have died with Christ [in baptism], we believe that we shall also live with him. We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him. (NAB Rom 6:7-9)

- ▶ If, like Paul insists, we die in Christ through baptism, what are the implications for us when he tells us that death has no more power over us?

Finally Paul tells the Romans:

As to his death, he died to sin once and for all; as to his life, he lives for God. Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as (being) dead to sin [through baptism] and living for God in Christ Jesus [through baptism]. (NAB Rom 6: 10-12)

- ▶ What is the challenge of this sentence?
- ▶ What does it mean to you that through baptism you are dead to sin and that you live for Christ?
- ▶ How should that impact the way you live your life?

## Liturgical sign: blessing of water at the Easter Vigil

- ▶ We have looked at baptism from the perspective of the sign of water in everyday life.
- ▶ We have considered baptism from the perspective of Paul who understands baptism as a grave, a watery grave in which we die so we can be born to new life in Christ.
- ▶ Let us discover now what the Church teaches us about baptism through its use as a sacramental/liturgical sign.

Father, you give us grace through sacramental signs which tell us of the wonders of your unseen power. In baptism we use your gift of water, which you have made a rich symbol of the grace you give us in this sacrament.

- ▶ What do you think *grace* is in these last two statements?

At the very dawn of creation your Spirit breathed on the waters, making them the wellspring of all holiness.

- ▶ What does this passage remind us about the origin of water and why it is used as a sacramental sign of baptism?

In the waters of the great flood you made a sign of the waters of baptism that makes an end of sin and a new beginning of goodness.

- ▶ What does this tell us about the *flood* and why it is understood as an image and a sign of the waters of baptism?

Through the waters of the Red Sea you led Israel out of slavery to be an image of God's holy people, set free from sin by baptism,

- ▶ What do you think the story of the Red Sea has to do with baptism?
- ▶ What does it teach us about baptism?

In the waters of the Jordan your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Spirit. Your Son willed that water and blood should flow from his side as he hung upon the cross.

- ▶ What sacraments use the sign of water and blood? What then did Jesus gift us with as he hung on the cross?

After his resurrection he told his disciples: “Go out and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

- ▶ What does this statement tell us about our baptismal responsibility?
- ▶ Why do you think we renew our baptism every year at Easter time?

Father, now look with love upon your Church and unseal for it the fountain of baptism. By the power of the Holy Spirit give to this water the grace of your Son, so that in the sacrament of baptism all those whom you have created in your likeness may be cleansed from sin and rise to a new birth of innocence by water and the Holy Spirit.

We ask you Father with your Son to send the Holy Spirit upon the waters of this font. May all who are buried with Christ in the death of baptism rise also with him to newness of life. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

- ▶ What do these last two statements tell us about the effects of baptism?
- ▶ What is the result of the grace of this sacrament?
- ▶ What happens to us in this sacrament?
- ▶ What touches you the most in this prayer?
- ▶ What speaks to your heart?
- ▶ How does this prayer speak to the journey you have been on over these past months?

From everything the liturgy teaches us about baptism, everything scripture teaches us and what we know about the sign of water from everyday life, let us now articulate what the Church teaches about this sacrament. Briefly recall what you learned about baptism today:

Baptism is:

- ▶ freedom from sin;
- ▶ participation in Jesus death and resurrection;
- ▶ being born again into Jesus' life;
- ▶ membership in the Body of Christ.

## Theology of Baptism:

The cleansing with water by the power of the living *word* washes away every stain of sin, original and personal, makes us sharers in God's own life as his adopted children (RCIA #5). Here are the main points in our theology:

- ▶ The Church calls the sacrament baptism. Why baptism? Sin is buried in water.
- ▶ Grace is the gift of God's self.
- ▶ Anointing. Through baptism we are anointed priest [to serve God's people], prophet [to proclaim God's word through deeds and proclamation], and king [to lead people to Christ].
- ▶ Baptism is called Enlightenment—because baptism radiates the light of Christ in us.
- ▶ Baptism is called the garment of immortality as it veils or hides our shame/sin.
- ▶ Baptism is called the bath of rebirth as it washes and recreates us. The old self dies and the new self is born.
- ▶ Baptism is called a seal. It is our guard and the sign of God's Lordship over our lives. It seals us into Christ's life and mission—into the Paschal Mystery.
- ▶ Important: baptism seals a person with an indelible mark, forever baptized into Christ. Thus it cannot be repeated. That is why persons with a valid baptism in another Church tradition are not re-baptized.
- ▶ Water from the earth symbolizes life; water from the sea symbolizes death, thus representing the mystery of Jesus' death. Those who are baptized are one with Christ who died on the cross—we too die with him in order to be resurrected and share new life.
- ▶ Jesus spoke of his death as a baptism.
- ▶ Blood and water that flowed from Jesus' side is a prefiguring of Eucharist and baptism.
- ▶ Symbols associated with baptism: Water [water is both tomb and womb—we die to be reborn in Christ]; Garment [through Baptism we put on Christ]; Light [through baptism we are enlightened by Christ—we are to let our light shine for all to see].
- ▶ Baptism is referred to also as a washing of regeneration of the Holy Spirit; born of water and the Holy Spirit (CCC: 1215).
- ▶ We are washed clean and born again in the Holy Spirit as a new creation in Christ.
- ▶ Necessity of Baptism: Jesus himself said that baptism is necessary for salvation.  
John 3: 5
  - Those who suffer death for the sake of faith but are not baptized are saved and considered baptized by blood.
  - Those who desire baptism and die unbaptized are baptized by desire.
- ▶ Baptism forgives sins.
- ▶ Through baptism we are incorporated into the Church—the family of God.
- ▶ We become adopted children of God.
- ▶ There are three sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist.
- ▶ Valid baptism: What makes a valid baptism? The baptismal rite itself includes immersion or pouring water on the head while invoking the Father, Son and Holy Spirit: the Trinity.



- ▶ Every time we make the sign of the cross we remember our baptism into his death.
- ▶ Baptism challenges us to go out and baptize all nations---in other words, to bring people to Christ, to serve those people and to teach them about Jesus.
- ▶ Every Lent we prepare to renew our baptismal promises at Easter.
  - Catholics renew their baptismal promises and commitment once a year at Easter time.